



Clinical Experience Integrated into the Medical Community

Joanie Holst, MS, NCTMB; Dale Healey, BS, DC; Beth Burgan, MFA, NCTMB
Northwestern Health Sciences University, Bloomington, MN

Introduction

Northwestern Health Sciences University (NWSU) is an multidisciplinary natural health care institution training health care professionals in the fields of massage therapy, acupuncture/Oriental medicine and chiropractic.

One of the commitments of the School of Massage Therapy is to offer the students supervised clinical experiences within various health care environments. These environments currently include hospitals, assisted care residences, outpatient cancer treatment facilities and a multi-disciplinary community clinic. The school's curriculum is designed to "step" the students through a developmental progression from their first clinical experience until they graduate. Within the classroom setting the students participate in a supervised public clinical experience (Public Classroom Clinic) toward the end of each trimester. Outside the classroom, students experience clinic shifts at a school owned off campus public clinic (Burnsville Student Clinic) as well as at various off campus community chair events.

During the second and third trimesters, the students interested in pursuing the above mentioned health care environments are able to do so. Elective classes are offered on the topics of: a) hospital based massage therapy, b) cancer and massage therapy, and c) geriatric massage therapy. Each of these elective classes includes didactic and discussion based classroom experiences as well as practical hands-on clinical rotations within the given environments.

Clinical Experiences Within The Core Curriculum

Public Classroom Clinic: Relaxation

- Supervised, safe, classroom environment
- First time to work with a client they have never met
- First time to work with two or three clients in a row
- Work with different sessions lengths: 30/60/90 minutes
- Students rotate through various responsibilities of clinic management

Public Classroom Clinic: Clinical

- Supervised, safe, classroom environment
- Work with "real" symptoms that client presents with
- Thorough health history intake done
- SOAP format session notes written following the session
- Students rotate through various responsibilities of clinic management

Burnsville Public Student Clinic

- Supervised, safe, clinic environment
- Required clinic shifts for every student
- Working with the public
- SOAP format session notes written following session

Community Off-site Chair Events

- Supervised, safe, environment
- Opportunity to function as manager of an event
- Opportunity to adapt to diverse client base and environments

Clinical Experiences within Healthcare Environments

Hospital Environment

- Elective Class: Hospital Based Massage Therapy
- Hospital Partnerships:
 - Regions Hospital; St. Paul, MN
 - Abbott Northwestern; Minneapolis, MN
 - Woodwinds Hospital; Woodbury, MN

Outpatient Cancer Treatment Facility

- Elective Class: Cancer and Massage Therapy
- Partnership with: Minnesota Oncology; Burnsville and Minneapolis, MN

Geriatric Environment

- Elective Class: Geriatric Based Massage Therapy
- Assisted Care Facilities:
 - Volunteers of America (VOA); Minnetonka & Edina, MN
 - Golden Living Centers; St. Louis Park, MN

Pillsbury House

- Inner-city Community Clinic
- Partnership with the University of Minnesota and the Adler Graduate School
- Integrated Disciplines:
 - Massage Therapy, Acupuncture, Chiropractic, Medicine, Psychology and Nursing
- Student directed clinic
- Services are free to the community

Conclusion

The result of this project has been extraordinary for the students of NWSU as well as the institutions served. These internship experiences have allowed a blending of the didactic information and technique skills gained within the classroom, as the students are able to apply what they have learned immediately into a real setting. These experiences have also increased both the maturation process and the confidence levels of the students. In addition, it has also helped the students to identify environments that they may be interested to work within after graduation, as well as identify the environments that were not a "fit" for them. In other words, it brings them one step closer to knowing where they may want to work for their first job. Lastly, the very important end result of this project is the opportunity to interface with medical professionals, to introduce and teach the students the appropriate protocols for working within these settings and to be training therapists qualified to work in these environments.

Until now, complementary therapies have seemed to "lurk" on the outskirts of traditional medicine. According to Bell (2009), "the line is blurring between what is "conventional" and what is "complementary", in an approach to practice, called integrative medicine" (p. 27). This concept identifies that Complementary and Alternative Medicine Therapies (CAM) are not alternative when they are used along with conventional medicine.

Project Goals and Objectives

By providing clinical experiences to massage therapy students in a variety of health care environments, we are able to accomplish the following objectives:

1. Students gain a greater appreciation for the role of massage therapy within health care.
2. Students see the value of partnering with other health care professionals.
3. Massage therapy best practices are demonstrated to other health care professionals.
4. The community is educated about massage therapy and its benefits.

References

Bell, Howard (2009). From the Margins to the Mainstream. Minnesota Medicine, Minnesota Medical Association, Minneapolis: MN. Pages 26-31.